

Vietnam

SOVIET ARMS AID TO HANOI IS DOWN

U.S. Figures Show a Sharp Drop Since '67 Despite the Present Offensive

WASHINGTON, April 12 (AP) — While Washington contends that Moscow is a major contributor to Hanoi's new offensive because of its shipments of heavy arms, a reading of United States intelligence estimates indicates that Soviet weapons assistance to North Vietnam is actually far smaller now than earlier in the war.

Because figures can be read different ways, it is difficult to pinpoint a contradiction. But since the Kremlin's aid flow has been going on for years, the Administration's stress on it now is clearly a matter of choice.

In his State of the World Message in February, President Nixon spoke of Hanoi's getting "nearly \$1-billion" a year in aid from its allies.

Last week Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird, mentioning a \$600-million figure, pointed to the Soviet Union as "the major supplier of the military arms and the munitions which are being used in North Vietnam." Therefore, Mr. Laird concluded, the Soviet Union is "a major contributor to the continuing conflict that exists in southeast Asia."

Aid Figures Provided

Yesterday United States Government sources, not allowing use of their agency name, made available figures that had been prepared within the intelligence community before Hanoi opened its offensive at the end of March.

The figures indicate that total aid to North Vietnam in 1971 from Communist countries was about the same as the year before, as was the flow from Moscow, and that both were well below the peak reported before the United States halted its bombing of the North in 1968.

The United States intelligence estimates included these:

Combined Soviet, Chinese and East European military and economic assistance to North Vietnam totaled \$1.02-billion in 1967, \$765-million in 1970, \$775-million in 1971.

The Russians shipped \$505-million in arms to North Vietnam in 1967, \$70-million in 1970 and \$100-million in 1971. Soviet economic assistance amounted to \$200-million in 1967, \$345-million in 1970 and \$315-million in 1971.

Total Soviet military-economic aid was \$705-million in 1967, \$415-million in 1970, and \$415-million again in 1971. The United States Government sources tied the "military" and "economic" categories together in saying that Soviet economic assistance consisted of items supporting Hanoi's defense effort.

Military assistance from China was \$145-million in 1967, \$85-million in 1970 and \$75-million in 1971, while Chinese economic help in these years was \$80-million, \$60-million and \$100-million, respectively.

Soviet Aid Is Stressed

Economic assistance from East European countries came to \$90-million in 1967, \$205-million in 1970 and \$185-million in 1971.

Administration spokesmen have stressed Soviet aid to North Vietnam because, they say, it is the largest outside support for Hanoi's drive and because it includes advanced weapons used in the military assault. Moscow has been supplying such items as surface-to-air missiles, tanks, heavy artillery and oil. Peking has provided small arms and ammunition.

Administration officials say Washington has made no diplomatic attempt to ask Moscow to curb the arms flow. They say the issue is one that President Nixon is likely to bring up in Moscow next month as part of an effort to urge big-power restraint in troubled areas.

The Russians have rebuffed past United States attempts to limit the supply of arms for countries in the Middle East.

United States spending on the Vietnam conflict is placed at about \$9-billion this year.